ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A Memorial Address

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Abraham Lincoln

A Memorial Address

DELIVERED BEFORE THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING, IN WITHERSPOON HALL, PHILADELPHIA, FRIDAY AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY 12, 1909

By

ETHELBERT D. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D.

President of Lafayette College

PHILADELPHIA

1909

University Extension Society

Lincoln Centenary Meeting

Friday Afternoon, February 12, 1909
at 3 o'clock
in Witherspoon Hall

Chairman, MR. ISAAC H. CLOTHIER

PROGRAM

Prayer — Rev. Robert Johnston

Introductory Remarks by the Chairman

Keller's American Hymn
Glee Club of the University of Pennsylvania

"Memories of Lincoln" (Whitman)
Mr. Llewellyn Powys of Cambridge University

Kipling's Recessional
Glee Club of the University of Pennsylvania

The Gettysburg Address — Mr. Isaac H. Clothier

Lowell's Tribute to Lincoln (Commemoration Ode)
Dr. J. Duncan Spaeth of Princeton University

Address on Lincoln
President E. D. Warfield of Lafayette College

America
Glee Club of the University of Pennsylvania and Audience

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY MR. ISAAC H. CLOTHIER, CHAIRMAN.

HAVING accepted, perhaps without due meditation, the duty of this hour, I approach its performance with extreme diffidence and distrust, growing out of a profound appreciation of the vastness of the subject, and the dignity and solemnity of the occasion.

This day marks the rounded century since the birth of the greatest American. It seems almost inconceivable that Abraham Lincoln passed from life a half-century ago,—lacking seven years—at the early age of fifty-six, nowadays scarcely accounted as the full maturity of ripened manhood. As I look into the faces of this gathering of earnest men and women, I realize there is a small minority here who, like myself, remember seeing the great President in person, but to the large majority he is but an historic character, something already immense and increasing in stature as the years go by, but he is not, nor can he be a close personal presence as we always think of those, our contemporaries, whom we saw and loved in life. Since Lincoln died there has come into existence, especially during the last twenty-five years, a vast literature concerning him, surpassed in volume, perhaps, only by the celebrated Napoleonic literature relating to one prodigy of human genius,—utterly divorced from conscience,—and including the history of Europe during an eventful period; and this literature has been the growth of three-quarters of a century. I cannot hope to add a single line of value to the Lincoln literature, but as one of the rapidly narrowing circle who saw Abraham Lincoln in the flesh, perhaps my

own most limited but intensely real recollections may find a place this centenary day.

I first heard of him when I was a youth, in 1858, when the memorable debate took place during the canvass for the Illinois Senatorship between him and Stephen A. Douglas. The former was almost unknown outside of his own State of Illinois, but his opponent was justly esteemed a giant in debate, having met and worsted in the arena of the United States Senate the other giants of those days, who, even though his superiors in intellectual equipment and scholarly statesmanship, dreaded his wonderful mental agility and his almost unequaled skill as a ready debater. The unknown backwoods lawyer, lacking as he came to manhood, even an ordinary common school education, seemed in advance like a baby in his hands, but with straightforward, plain honesty of speech, devoid of rhetorical skill or the trained debater's subtlety, to the astonishment of the nation he overcame his distinguished opponent, and was crowned victor by the nation and the world. From this time he was a national figure, though for some time longer little known personally outside his own State. In February, 1860, he came to New York by invitation, and all the chief men of the metropolis crowded Cooper Institute to see this new great man, the uncouth giant of the West.

As Joseph H. Choate, then a young man, tells us of that evening:

"It was a great audience, including all the noted men—all the learned and cultured—of his party in New York: editors, clergymen, statesmen, lawyers, merchants, critics. They were all very curious to hear him. His fame as a powerful speaker had preceded him. When Mr. Bryant presented him, on the high platform of the Cooper Institute, a vast sea of eager upturned faces greeted him, full of intense curiosity to see what this rude child of the people

was like. He was equal to the occasion. When he spoke he was transformed; his eyes kindled, his voice rang, his face shone and seemed to light up the whole assembly. For an hour and a half he held his audience in the hollow of his hand. His style of speech and manner of delivery were severely simple. What Lowell called 'The grand simplicities of the Bible,' with which he was so familiar, were reflected in his discourse. With no attempt at ornament or rhetoric, without parade or pretence, he spoke straight to the point. If any came expecting the turgid eloquence or the ribaldry of the frontier, they must have been startled at the earnest and sincere purity of his utterances. It was marvelous to see how this untutored man, by mere self discipline and the chastening of his own spirit, had outgrown all meretricious arts, and found his own way to the grandeur and strength of absolute simplicity. That night the great hall, and the next day the whole city, rang with delighted applause and congratulations, and he who had come as a stranger departed with the laurels of a great triumph."

That year, 1860, was eventful in the history of the nation; the great slavery contest had been on for many years, and was then approaching its historic culmination, when the institution went down in fire and blood. The Republican party, born four years before, was by the inexorable logic of events coming to its own; the question was, who should be its standard bearer during the crucial period in the life of the nation on which we were about to enter.

The Republican Convention met in June, and a half-dozen prominent Republicans were placed in nomination, including Mr. Seward, Mr. Chase, Mr. Bates, Judge McLean, and Mr. Lincoln, but the contest was really only between Mr. Seward and Mr. Lincoln. All eyes were fixed on the former, the undoubted leader of his party, the great statesman of the period; and as his opponent had only just

come into the national attention, the nomination of Mr. Seward was regarded almost a certainty, and to the worldly-wise no other result seemed reasonable. But mighty, though unseen forces were silently working, and the hand of God was leading the nation. On the third ballot, this man from the lowest order of the people, was named the standard bearer to the astonishment of the world, and the solemn march of events proceeded. That political campaign can never be forgotten by those who are privileged to remember it. The "Wide-Awakes" were organized all over the North and marching by tens of thousands, with lanterns and uniforms, were precursors of the armed regiments that a few months later sprang into existence at Lincoln's call to take part in the great conflict of the century.

Then came the election (how proud I was to cast my first vote, and for Abraham Lincoln), and in due course the inauguration. Mr. Lincoln arrived in Philadelphia on February 21st, on his way to Washington. At the home of a friend, on Sixteenth Street above Chestnut, I saw him pass in an open barouche, and I remember the surprise with which I saw the newly-grown whiskers on the face which up to that time had always been closely shaven. He stood in the barouche as he passed, and removed his hat, and I had a deliberate and impressive view of his tall figure and most expressive countenance, which I have never forgotten. That night he stayed at the Continental Hotel, and the news came to him of his proposed assassination in Baltimore. Next morning at 6.30 I was at the Ninth Street door of the hotel when he came out with the committee and took his seat in an open barouche on his way to raise the flag at Independence Hall. A cordon of police surrounded the carriage, but I succeeded in obtaining a place where I walked shoulder to shoulder with one of the officers, exactly opposite, and only a few feet from his person. I walked down Chestnut Street observing him carefully, and

listening to his scant conversation till at Sixth Street I was crowded out of my place. The procession rounded the corner, and the party alighted and passed through Independence Square, and soon appeared on the platform in front of Independence Hall. I stood as near as the great crowd permitted, and saw him plainly and watched him carefully in the delivery of his short address, and his raising of the flag.

I never saw him again in life.

Four years and two months after I saw his great funeral which seemed to include the whole nation, as it proceeded from city to city on its way to the tomb at Springfield, Illinois. The day after its arrival in Philadelphia, his body lay in state in Independence Hall, and I was privileged to have rather a deliberate view. In that four years, he who was at the time of his election almost despised by the so-called great men of the day, had grown to be truly a historic figure, beside which the then great men of the times became pigmies by comparison. As Stanton, who had a few years before greatly undervalued him, said with deep emotion, after watching all night at his bedside, and just after the breath had left his body:

> He belongs now to the ages.

And again,

> There lies the greatest master of men the world has ever known.

I said at the outset of my remarks, that Abraham Lincoln is esteemed the first American. No one would undervalue the name of Washington, truly the Father of his Country, and his place in history and in the minds of all Americans cannot be filled by any other. But Washington was not of the people; he came of a distinguished ancestry and into an inheritance of wealth, culture, and exceptional opportunity. We have for him—and our

posterity must always have—a reverential admiration, not unmixed with awe, but in which affection can scarcely be said to have a place, and we must ever regard him as a severely majestic, unapproachable figure.

Abraham Lincoln was of the mold of the common people.

> The color of the ground was in him, the red earth,
> The tang and odor of the primal things.

When we review his extraordinary career, and the history of the nation at that time, can we believe otherwise than that a special Providence surrounded him and this nation in that wonderful epoch? A backwoodsman, without even a common school education, homely of feature and ungainly in person, with everything in appearance against him, he came to the front in a great national crisis and shamed the trained statesmanship and the scholarly culture of the period with his inexorable logic and his command of the purest English, some extracts from which will be read on this occasion, and which are among the finest specimens of our English prose. These marvelous expressions came not from the scholarly and cultured Sumner, or Phillips, or Motley, with generations of culture behind them, nor from the President of Harvard University, but from the rail-splitter, trained amid the roughest surroundings, who, notwithstanding, proved to be the genius of common sense and the embodiment of the American conscience of the period.

Conway said of one of Emerson's sentences, that it "was like the hand of God upon his shoulder." May we not say of some of Lincoln's immortal phrases, that they were the warning voice of God stirring the conscience of the nation, as for instance—"If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." A moral and philosophical argument in eight words.

George William Curtis, speaking of Wendell Phillips at Fanueil Hall, said: "It was that greatest of oratorical triumphs when a supreme emotion lifted the orator to adequate expression. Three such scenes are illustrious in our history—Patrick Henry's electrical defiance of George the III., in the Continental Congress; Wendell Phillips in Fanueil Hall, and Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg—three, and there is no fourth. They transmit, unextinguished, the torch of an eloquence which has aroused nations and changed the course of history."

The occasion is an inspiration, but with the program before us, for me to extend unduly, would be without excuse.

The years and the decades have passed, "without haste and without rest," and now the second century dawns. Through its course the American people must cherish with pride and deep emotion the remembrance of the mighty triumph and the mighty sacrifice with which the name of the great emancipator will be forever blended, and the robust example which the first American must remain to the young men of America, while the memory of his life and death are cherished by the nation; and will that not be until the now great Republic,—the hope of mankind—unmindful of its glorious mission in the world, and disregarding the precious lesson of Abraham Lincoln's life, shall forfeit its birthright and its costly regeneration, and unworthily lose its place among the nations of the earth? May that time never come.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

By ETHELBERT D. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

HOW inscrutable are the ways of Providence, and who can foretell the destiny of men? Who could have dreamed that the child who, on the twelfth of February, 1809, was born in the barrens of Kentucky, of illiterate parentage, poor and in the humblest walk of life, would grow up to be not only a leader of men; not only the emancipator of oppressed and suffering millions; not only the guardian and conservator of our national union; but one who should combine in himself all these lofty destinies and be the very embodiment of one of the purest, noblest and most unselfish movements which have been recorded upon the pages of human history? Who should become all this, without for a moment losing the marks of his origin; without ceasing to be the man of the people: without seeking, or even wishing to cut the ties which bound him to the people from whom he sprang, and to whom he never ceased to belong? And that a great nation, bound together through the wisdom of his statesmanship, would celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of his birth?

In the form and character of Abraham Lincoln there was nothing of the hero of romance: but there was much of the hero of every day life. There was nothing to catch the imagination, no beauty of person, no grace, no wealth poured out by the lavish hand of nature or of art: but

much to seize the intellect and lay hold upon the heart in the quiet, genial, melancholy man who loved his country better than his life.

I need not tell again his story. Born in Kentucky, taken to Indiana in his childhood, thence to Illinois, for a time a flatboatman on the Mississippi, then the keeper of a country store, doing all that he did with his might, active, alert, interested in everything which went on about him, quick to learn, ready to apply all that he learned to the problems constantly presented by life in a new state in times of great excitement. One by one he shook off the shackles which bound him, first the link of contentment with the life of narrow struggle for mere existence; then that of illiteracy; then that of poverty; till at last strong in the consciousness of a growing manhood he began to make an impression on his friends and neighbors and to give the first proof of his power to lead men. One thing however it is worth while to note: Lincoln was a self educated man; by which I do not mean that he was an uneducated man, but that he was educated, and that he educated himself. We are told with what difficulty he obtained books; and with what devotion he toiled over them. Happily the greatest of books fell early into his hands, captivated his mind and glorified his literary style. We are told also with what pains he practised composition. When he had no paper, planing bits of shingle he wrote essays upon them. He himself tells us how he sought to express himself in the fewest possible words in order that he might get as much as possible upon his shingle. A good training this; training in those important principles of composition—brevity, conciseness, directness. Not only so but he studied the influence of what he wrote upon others, reading his compositions to them, committing them and delivering them as speeches, and also speaking extempore in the field and about the village store, always

carefully noting the effect of what he said upon his hearers. Again and again when he saw anything which struck him he wrote down comments upon it, little moral homilies upon his companions, and their ways, upon the virtues and vices which appeared in the rural community where he lived; essays brief as those of Bacon: less eloquent, less elegant, less elevated than those famous essays, but sharing with them their greatest excellences, brevity and insight. In this school he learned two things: to know himself and to know his fellow men. Only a class it is true, the plain men and women of America, but the reservoir of power in a democratic country. First and last he proved how well he understood them and how capable he was of leading them to the performance of a great and glorious work.

It was not till the summer of 1858 that Lincoln attracted national notice. From the date of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, prohibiting slavery north of 36 deg. 30′ north latitude, there had been a steady pro-slavery reaction. The Dred Scott case had deeply accentuated this. The South was desperately in earnest. The North having temporized seemed more and more likely to give way. Of the northern men who favored a policy of *laissez faire* with respect to the South's peculiar institution no one after the President was more prominent, not even he was so notable, as Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. Douglas had been a leader in the reactionary step of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, he was now a bold and unscrupulous defender of its policy, and as a candidate for re-election to the Senate in the winter of 1858 he truckled to the South and its demand of "room for slavery." Lincoln was by general consent brought forward by the Republicans of Illinois to oppose Douglas. Debates were arranged between the two champions and attracted the deepest interest throughout the land. Douglas was a dangerous antagonist. Possessed of high qualities of mind,

and a most forcible speaker; he possessed also, and used without scruple, all the arts of the politician. No one played with more skilled hand upon popular prejudices; no one more shrewdly preached peace, peace, where there was no peace; no one was more capable of making the worse appear the better cause. But he found in Lincoln one who was scarcely less a master of assemblies and even more a master of the hearts of men, not however on account of an equal mastery of the art of chicane, but through his "brave, old wisdom of sincerity." Indeed his imperturbable good nature, his quiet force of character, his stern, rough-hewn loyalty, already began to change the noble policy he espoused, from a mere moral sentiment to a bugle blast calling men to action. In the very first speech of the campaign Lincoln declared in words of prophetic import: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved: I do not expect the house to fall: but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction or its advocates will push it forward until it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, North as well as South." Such language though not uncommon for the past thirty years on the passionate lips of Calhoun and his South Carolina constituents, though not unknown to the more impassioned advocates of abolition in the North, was new in the calm assertion of policy of a clear-headed, unsensational northern politician. It brought upon him the fiercest assaults of his political opponents and awoke doubt and fears in the breasts of many of his own party. From that day the die was cast. From that day the

problem grew more and more clear in its statement, and always more and more closely approximated Lincoln's statement. With him it was never to be first and before all else a struggle for emancipation: but a struggle for a Union freed from the great cause of dissension. With him it was never to be a struggle for Union only, but Union with liberty.

Abolitionists might distrust and oppose him, conservative, reactionary, pro-slavery, union men might refuse his lead; but he never faltered, though he often went forward with infinite patience. He held the famous sentiment of Jackson: "The Union: it must be preserved;" and not less the great language which Jefferson made use of in the Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal, are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness:" and held them in the spirit of Webster who in his reply to Hayne had declared the sentiment of every true American heart—"Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable."

There was nothing of the rhetorician in his utterances. It was their almost judicial calmness which made them seem so rash to conservatives. It was their air of decisive finality which made the abolitionists of the extremer views conclude that he was unfitted to be their standard bearer. As the summer of 1860 approached it looked as though he was the choice of no party or faction because he had so confidently chosen the *via media*. But when the convention met in Chicago for the nomination of a Republican candidate for the Presidency it was obvious to all men that the time was ripe for the Republican party. How could the golden opportunity best be seized. Lincoln, the man who had chosen the *via media*; Lincoln, the man who had spoken boldly, but never rashly; Lincoln, the man whom some doubted because he was too characterless to have

bitter enemies, whom others wanted because he would be a conservative man at the head of a radical party — received the nomination on the third ballot, because as men said, he was "available." The South was stirred by it. This was the man who had forced Douglas by the overwhelming power of his denunciation of the proslavery attitude to take a position which had destroyed him in the South: if he could lead the pliant and politic Douglas thus far, how far would he lead the antislavery northern men, how far would he not go under the urging of the impatient abolitionists. Neither party knew the man they had to deal with: he did not himself dream of the splendid heights of manhood and statesmanship to which he was to climb before his work should be accomplished.

He took one step at a time. Infinite patience was united to absolute sincerity. Courage was joined in happy wedlock with conscience. One step at a time and not one backward.

The country realized as '60 darkened to its close that the long dreaded crisis was at hand. The inevitable conflict which Calhoun had preached, almost as a crusade, for a generation, was at hand. Men doubted if the ties which bound state to state could survive the shock. Philosophers, with sage assumption, told of the instability of republics; historians ransacked the records of the past and produced endless lists of false analogies to support the theories of the philosophers; jurists pronounced the constitution fundamentally feeble; politicians met in conventions threatening dire things if the tool of antislavery fanaticism should be elevated to the presidency; self satisfied patriots wept and wrung their hands that men should dream of placing a "mountebank," a "mere western joker," in the chair of the chief executive in such a crisis.

It was a time to try men's souls. There was no lack of men who wanted to save the country. There was only

a lack of those who saw clearly how to do it. Many thought they saw the way. Doctrinaires, blind leaders of the blind. When was there ever a lack of quacks with nostrums fitted for every emergency? calculated to correct the finances, to abolish poverty, and to introduce peace among parties? Lincoln was not one of these wiseacres. He said plainly that he did not see just how the country was to be saved, but there was a way, and he was ready to try to find it.

It is not for us to criticise the men who stood abashed before the problem. Men as wise, as brave, as loyal as we, faltered and failed. The specious pleas of Douglas satisfied many; the middle way of Bell seemed safe and sure to many a loyal Fabian; the courtly Breckinridge, manly, earnest, eloquent, seemed to the Southern mind not only loyal, but right; in such company was it necessary to follow the gaunt figure of the Illinois leader? What did he know of statesmanship? What experience had he to fit him to take the helm in such a gale? Yet the storm gathered round him. There was something so blunt and straightforward about him that the South went into a frenzy at his candidacy. This was no Don Quixote riding a joust at windmills. This man was in deadly earnest and somehow he had gotten the world to recognize this, and not only so, but that this was a time to be in earnest. Having lost their favorite analogy for abolitionists, the South now sought to call him for the servant instead of the master, Sancho Panza! Perhaps after all, in the homely, practical philosophy of that much misunderstood character there was a touch much akin to the genius of this new birth of the crude West. How it should fit the occasion remained to be seen.

Meanwhile vituperation was winning him notice and giving him more and more importance in the campaign. The reaction towards pro-slavery views which had begun

in 1854 gradually spent itself and the counter movement, which made slow progress at first, advanced with tremendous force in 1860 and culminated on November 6th when it became evident that Lincoln by some subtle alchemy had welded the sundered factions in the North into a triumphant party.

For a time the country seemed to stand aghast at what it had done. In the South the news of his election was like a tocsin of war. South Carolina fulfilled her threat of years standing, which the country had come to think but a cry of "wolf." The national government was paralysed. The disaffected states one by one began to wheel into line. What was the spell of this baleful conjurer at the mere whisper of whose coming a great nation fell into ruins?

It was mere panic terror. That there were men high in his party who wanted to destroy slavery root and branch was true. It was also true that these men did not believe that Mr. Lincoln could be counted on in this work,—certainly not for immediate action. But his election, such was the declaration of South Carolina, "was a menace to the South's peculiar institution." A menace? Had not higher things than this been menaced and the country left unshattered? Had not personal liberty been menaced by the institution of slavery? Had not peace and good government been menaced by South Carolina on account of the tariff act of 1828? Was not the integrity of the Union, surely a higher and a dearer possession than a few slaves were they men or chattels, menaced by her ordinances of secession itself? Yet they declared that this "western attorney" was a menace to this great country; and asked if it were not better that he should die than that the country should be imperiled. Men asked this question with compressed lips and gleaming eyes. Newspapers asked it with fiery threats. But those who asked

were plainly more intent on hurrying on the work of disintegration than of staying it. The calm, thoughtful man on whom the work of restoring each shattered column to its former place, of maintaining each staunch one where it stood, of preserving our national temple in all its unspoiled symmetry, took no heed of threats, but waited patiently his time.

How his great heart must have bled as he saw the disintegration going on with not a hand raised to stop it. His task was being made harder every day by the feebleness of Buchanan's administration. Like a tiny stream eating through the levees which hold the great Mississippi in bounds the little thread of disunion sentiment spread. The little trickling stream fast became a broad destroying flood. How long would it take till all the South should be submerged? Think of the man sitting at his home waiting, waiting, till he could legally spring forward to fill the breach and check the torrent!

The scene naturally suggests the last days of the Roman Republic. The picture which Cicero has left us in his letters of the way he sat and watched the swift decay of his beloved country, the hopeless attitude of the conservatives, the patient hopefulness of the few who had they but a leader ready might have saved the state. Pompey was as futile as our own ineffectual President. The party of order waited then when it might have struck. Lincoln and his party might have struck when they waited. But he was as sagacious as he was patient. It was eternal law; not merely civil, but moral law, for which he stood. He could wait for years, he could endure anything, rather than sully the great principle of "liberty under law," whose champion he was.

Amid breathless excitement the eventful day drew on. Threats and curses fell thicker and thicker upon him. Offers of escort from various military organizations came

to him. But he disregarded the one and declined the other. He was still a private citizen. He would travel alone and protected only by conscious rectitude of purpose in the serene contempt which the earnest feel for bluster and braggadocio. The whole country watched with breathless excitement his progress to Washington. Every loyal breast breathed a sigh of relief when the oath of office was taken and the affairs of the nation were safely in his hands. His inaugural address with its simplicity, seriousness, and impression of resolute purpose created the greatest confidence in the North. It was received with derisive mockery in the South—"Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad."

With a cabinet representing no faction, with a broad declaration of an earnest intention to maintain both the constitution and the Union in their entirety, Lincoln began the four years of his terrible struggle with overwhelming odds.

As we look back upon those years we do not see how wofully hopeless the struggle was now and again; we do not see how nearly alone the President stood. It was apparent from the outset that he was to be the tool of no party and of no faction. His immense personality rose slowly but surely above the surging crowd of lesser men. Men struggled to hold him back, men struggled to push him forward; men chafed at his delay, men cried out against his precipitancy; men denounced him as false to his promises, as Machiavellian in his duplicity. Unaffected by it all he strode forward to his goal. It seems incredible to us now that he should have been so misunderstood, opposed, thwarted, even by his closest advisers. But gradually men saw the master in him and so soon as this was clearly seen he became powerful for good. The weight of care and responsibility was thenceforth never to be lifted from his shoulders. What wonder then that he should grow into

the type of man we know; deliberate, patient, self-contained, given at times to long periods of thoughtful silence, deeply tinged with melancholy. Those who were near to him tell us that he was wont at times to sit for hours absorbed in thought, looking neither to the right nor to the left. And yet through it all, no hasty act broke the serene dignity of his life, no unmeasured word revealed the over burdened spirit, he moved with the unswerving certainty of one of nature's forces to his goal.

No man in the world's history ever passed through so great a crisis with more simple, unpretentious manliness. Men watched his progress with ever increasing wonder and admiration. Day by day he revealed new qualities. Fresh problems constantly confronted him, inherently difficult and often rendered almost impossible of successful solution by the want of unity in his supporters. But each demand upon him seemed to create the power to meet it. He grew in resources almost hourly. Like the athlete in training, his powers of mind took on a new strength with each exertion. Thus was revealed his wonderful reserves of mental and moral power. No one dreamed how much power he possessed. Nor would it have been natural if they had. Lincoln said of himself: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me." Had he tried to control the events of those stormy years it would have made ruin inevitable. All he could hope to do was to meet each problem as it presented itself with the utmost resources which he could command and direct it as far as possible. He battled bravely with each and all; he often had to be content with only half what he strove for, but he made no concessions.

No episode in his career has been so misunderstood as his management of the slavery question. Even many who are well content with the result cannot to this day see the plain practical logic of events which controlled his

policy in this matter. The position which he took in the first inaugural recognized the right of property in the slaves of the South, the legality of the fugitive slave legislation, and seemed to place him in accord with the views of the Union men of the border states. Personal pledges too were given that he had no thought of destroying property in slaves. These pledges were generally conditional and those to whom they were given never fulfilled their part, but they did not refrain for that reason from casting stones at him. That his declared policy was his actual policy there is no just ground to doubt. That he afterwards abandoned it does not prove the contrary. The captain who is forced under stress of weather to cast his cargo overboard does not thereby prove that when he left port he meant to abandon it. In '61 there was enough to do without assailing outright the possession of slaves; the urgent demand was to stop the extension of slavery in the territories, a task which a wise man might well think enough for present thought. And Mr. Lincoln was not the man to anticipate. True, he was utterly without fear; ready to undertake whatever was necessary; blind some thought to the real peril; but pacification without sacrifice of principle was his first aim.

To this generation it seems that the day had fully come for the axe to be laid to the root of the tree; that no greater evil than a patched up truce, leaving the great issue unsettled could have happened to the country. But the prayer "Give peace in our time, O Lord," is a very natural petition and one to which the heart of every lover of his country will respond with a deep amen! So there were few Union men in 1861 who would not have been glad to have had peace on the basis of the *status quo*. So well was this understood that the South did not believe that the North would fight at all. At a conference of Confederate officers held early in 1861 the duration of

hostilities was discussed and Robert Toombs declared that in six weeks the North would abandon the struggle. When Basil Duke, then a young officer from Missouri, afterwards a dashing General of Cavalry, "the brains of Morgan's command," ventured to question this view he was heard with amazement and derision.

Lincoln delayed long. He sternly repressed unsanctioned acts of emancipation by army officers. At last when emancipation came, it came when it could be justified. The armies had rallied from defeat and were generally victorious; the Confederates after ample warning had persisted in resistance to regularly constituted authority; the act itself is amply justifiable as a war measure. The methods of its execution are above criticism.

The justness of the destruction of any kind of property in time of peace by an amendment to the Constitution might be doubted—if the right of ownership in that property were fundamentally wrong and injurious to the Republic it ought not to be doubted. Such was the form in which the proposition must have eventually come before the country had not the South precipitated the conflict. It is written "that he who taketh the sword shall perish by the sword." The administration accepted the appeal, the arbitrament according to all the rules of war was regularly determined.

If any objection can be found to the action of the President it can only be from that class from which I spring, the Southern Union slaveholders. I thank God that my father and grandfathers while yielding to the evil of the social order in which their lives were cast consistently opposed it, and actively favored emancipation. To such men it might have seemed as if they were being punished for the sins of others; how much more true is it to say that it was their privilege to surrender so much for their fatherland.

The country has not only long ago acquiesced, but joyfully acquiesced, in this part of Lincoln's work. There can be little doubt that when History sets her seal upon it, it will be that of highest approval.

While the war was going on, with alternation of the bitterness of defeat and the pain of triumph over brethren; while the slavery problem was being cautiously worked out; one of the most serious complications of foreign affairs which we have ever had to face was demanding the utmost diplomacy. France and England, partly misunderstanding, partly misconstruing, wholly ready to profit by our misfortunes, hung about our shores. We were fully occupied at home, it seemed as if they might treat us as they would. By a judicious mingling of boldness with prudence; by decision in action coupled with the utmost discretion and moderation in speech; Lincoln weathered the storm and placed us in a condition to demand as a powerful and once more united nation that reparation which we had declared we should seek. The outside world — perhaps unconscious of the immensity of the tasks at home—have agreed in pronouncing the diplomatic triumphs of this administration the most admirable of Lincoln's achievements.

While Lincoln was still alive Lowell compared him to Henry IV. of France — Henry of Navarre. He said of Henry, "that he was as full of wise saws and modern instances as Mr. Lincoln, but beneath all this was the thoughtful, practical, human, and thoroughly earnest man, around whom the fragments of France were to gather themselves till she took her place again as a planet of the first magnitude in the European system." To my mind the comparison is more specious than real. And it fails most in just this point. Henry gave way to outside pressure, sacrificed principle to policy, a great cause to personal advantage. Henry, indeed, consolidated France politically, but it was a triumph of the lower element the fruits of

which his grandson reaped when he repealed the edict of Nantes. Henry, indeed, built up a great and splendid dynasty for himself but at the cost of building it on the sands, and when the French and Spanish Bourbons seemed to have their heads in the skies the winds smote upon them and the result is known and read of all men. It was as if Lincoln had yielded to the slave interest, had accepted that condition of which he earlier spoke and saved the Union, all slave, old and new, North and South. Men might have hailed him as the preserver of his country: men might have lived happily for a generation, for a century, in a country so saved: but what would have been the legacy to posterity? No, the likeness, even heightened as it was, two years after Lowell wrote, by the analogy of Henry's death by the dagger of Ravailliac in "the deep damnation of his taking off," is rather a striking contrast. Lincoln, wavering never, climbed higher by devotion to a loftier principle than he dreamed of. His legacy to his country is a united people purged of the great cause of dissension — all free. Think for a moment what France might have become if Henry had spent his great energies in securing full freedom to Protestantism, instead of mere toleration; and had won not only that, but had succeeded in leaving a France wholly, permanently, gloriously Protestant. France might never had had a Richelieu or a Mazarin; a Vendome or a Grand Monarch; but she would have been spared a Voltaire and a Rousseau; a Robespierre and a Marat; and all the wretched ruthlessness which sprang from that rabble devil-born rioting in the most terrible of revolutions.

The greatest loss which as a people we are to experience in connection with Mr. Lincoln is the fading knowledge of the man as he actually was. To idealize him is to miss the lesson of his life. His birth, origin, self-education, homeliness of language, broad humor, were his very self. His

serene trust in God was as characteristic and not less his want of confidence in Man. Good old Puritan Calvinism, sprung, not out of the teaching of men, but out of the teaching of nature and the promptings of his own heart.

His genial humour was an immense power. It warmed his personal relations with men; it softened the Doric sternness of his mind; it gave point and apt illustration to a policy which rose in itself above his advisers as well as his critics; it was a shield to shelter half accepted truths from too close scrutiny, to protect a half developed policy from criticism at the wrong moment.

Perhaps there is no more pertinent example of this than his famous reply to the Confederate emissaries at Old Point Comfort. He declined to treat for peace with the Confederate government. It had no legal existence. He was only willing to deal with the states and receive them back to their allegiance as the first step to negotiations. The emissaries entered into a lengthy and didactic discussion of the relation of the question to constitutional law, and finally said: "There is a precedent for treating with rebels in arms, Charles I. having done so." Lincoln at once replied, "I do not very particularly recall the case cited: but I do recall that Charles I. lost his head."

He was a man of the people and his career is the highest expression of the possibilities of popular government. As was to be expected, a certain homely penetration, good nature, and hard-headed sense were among his equipment. It was the extraordinary breadth and balance of these powers which was so remarkable. Men of the people have frequently possessed a pungent, epigrammatic oratory but rarely touched with the tenderness which tempts to tears. This Lincoln possessed in the highest degree. His inaugurals are full of power. They go to the mind with a force that depends on nothing except the justness and truth of their statements. They do not so much

arouse enthusiasm, as stir the heart with a passion akin to sorrow. In his immortal address at Gettysburg he rises to a height which no other American orator has attained. It is epic in its fresh unpretentious strength, it speaks to the heart, not through figures and tropes, but in its own language and directly. Read this speech and then compare it with the funeral oration of Pericles, that splendid monument of Attic eloquence, and how much more soul stirring are the simple words of the American. The adornments of the golden period of Greek rhetoric become tawdry in comparison; they seem the tinsel of the tongue, not the beaten gold of the heart's full utterance. Compare it with Edward Everett's well nigh forgotten oration, to which it was meant to be but a "grace before meat"—and we see that the highest oratory is the expression of the feelings of the heart rather than the outgoings of the intellect. Let Lincoln's name be forgotten, let his memory become a tale that is told, and in some distant day let some unexpecting hand unearth this oration and his second inaugural address and men will wonder what mighty heart pulsed out such tender words; what brain conceived thoughts of such simple grandeur. If our children are taught this brief oration, they will not let his memory die or his name be effaced from the roll of the good and great.

If we compare Lincoln with those about him we see how he rises above them; how he seems to dominate them because of his complete understanding of the relative importance of the problems of his age. When we contrast him with those opposed to him we begin to understand how great he was. One contrast is forced upon anyone who considers whence he sprang and to what height he climbed. He and Jefferson Davis were both born in Kentucky in 1808 and 1809. Both removed from Kentucky in childhood, Davis going to the Southwest, Lincoln to the Northwest. Both served in the Black Hawk war,

Davis as an officer in the regular army, Lincoln in the volunteers. Both were presidential electors in 1844, Davis voting for Polk and the extension of slavery, Lincoln for Henry Clay and the principles of progress. Both were elected to Congress, the one in 1845, the other in 1846. Davis was inaugurated as President of the Confederacy February 8, 1861, Lincoln as President of the United States March 4, 1861. The details of such a comparison are too many to be more than suggested here. How character rises above station; conscience above ambition!

Set over against him by a strange destiny was another who seemed to possess as a birthright all that Lincoln accomplished. Born in Kentucky, the descendent of statesmen, rising step by step along the natural path of political distinction, in the Legislature, in Congress, in the chair of the Vice-President, John Cabell Breckinridge stood face to face with Abraham Lincoln as his competitor for the highest office in the gift of the people. The one Kentucky looked upon as the true heir — Isaac the son of promise — the other as Ishmael, child of the bond servant. The courtly Breckinridge, possessing every virtue which the nation delighted to honor, possessing every quality deemed necessary to produce a perfect statesman, the confidence and affection of all who knew him in private life, the admiration and good will even of his opponents in public life, handsome, courageous, eloquent; seemed to cast completely in the shadow that gaunt, ungraceful, uncouth brother who had wandered away from the old Kentucky home, who had delved in the virgin Western soil until he had become stained with its clay and marked with its ague fits, until he had come to love a fact rather than a figure of rhetoric, to value truth above tradition, and morality rather than political success.

As they faced each other, there seemed no room for rivalry; there seemed no possibility that having come

along the paths which they had followed hitherto any man should turn away from that noble and attractive figure to embrace the views of his ungainly countryman. But nature sometimes sets her stamp of greatness on uncouth forms. The highest greatness with her transcends the graceful proportions and regular arrangements which are so pleasing to the well trained eye. Breaking away from all set rule she now and again raises to the very highest place one who possesses a spell which men call genius, but which God loves as truth. Love for a kinsman cannot blind me to the fact that he was wrong; that he committed himself to the maintenance of an evil, which God had decreed should be blotted from the face of the earth; while Lincoln with the power of profound conviction, and the vision of a true seer, took God for his helper and truth for his guide and led a perplexed people to the only conclusion consistent with righteousness and consonant with human progress.

The vulgar mind delights in men of a single quality, and when it finds men of breadth and height, richly endowed by nature and nobly fashioned by circumstance, insists upon appraising them in a single phrase. But great men have atmosphere, that subtle indefinable quality which we call personality, that fine reserve which makes them at once the delight and the riddle of their time. Men do not know how to anticipate what they are going to do, because they cannot see with their eyes. Men cannot estimate what they did, because they only comprehend part of the plan and part of the performance. We may oftentimes be satisfied with the broken fragments of such men's performances and so men delight to fasten upon Lincoln's patriotism, his humanity, his humor, or any other of a half dozen conspicuous qualities. Forgetful for a time that he possessed other qualities as noble and as enobling.

None of these is more engaging than his compassion.

Nor is it more often illustrated than in his frequent pardoning of deserters. Real as the compassion, the human sympathy, the kindness of heart that prompted him to these acts was, a large public policy lay behind them. He could hardly have withstood Mr. Stanton's severe criticism and open opposition, and the violent antagonism of the regular army, unless this had been the case. He well recognized that so dreadful a struggle taxing to the utmost the resources of the people, demanding volunteers and unpopular drafts, could not be carried through by drastic measures. It was necessary that the people should realize that the bitter business of the war was being done at as cheap a price as possible, and a wise and generous recognition that the homesick boy was not of much value in the camp as a soldier, and might be of a great value in the home, especially after he had recovered his moral tone, was a shrewd estimate of popular feeling, as well as a noble concession to the human heart.

And indeed Mr. Lincoln knew how to reach the human heart. Sometimes he traveled the king's highway — as in the Gettysburg address—right to the castle gates and summoned it as a rightful lord; sometimes he loitered by the winding way leading to the postern opened by jest and story, as when he read immediately before proposing to his cabinet his Emancipation Proclamation a humorous chapter from Artemus Ward. Sometimes he passed through the secret gate of sympathy and tears, as in his immortal letter to Mrs. Bixby. Always he found entrance where he would, even at last into the heart of Southern men and women, when his sympathy for an oppressed and enslaved race was transferred to a war-worn and exhausted people whose cup of bitterness he would fain sweeten with a just peace and a generous reconstruction.

That he possessed in full measure the saving gift of humor sometimes obscures the fact which he forcibly

asserted for himself that he was no mere joker. "I believe," he said, "I have a popular reputation of being a story teller, but I do not deserve the name in its general sense, for it is not the story itself but its purpose or effect that interests me. I often avoid a long and serious discussion by others, or a laborious explanation on my own part, by a short story that illustrates my point of view. So the sharpness of a refusal or the edge of a rebuke may be blunted by an appropriate story so as to save wounded feeling and yet serve the purpose. No, I am no simple story teller, but story telling as an emolient saves me very much friction and disturbance."

A man who plays both with laughter and with tears upon the cords of the human heart must be careful to keep his own heart in tune, responsive to every noble impulse. That Lincoln did this is the common testimony. The strongest evidence that can be given of this is his magnanimity, the largeness of mind which enabled him to make those who had been his political rivals his cabinet advisers, and to tolerate the bureaucratic manner of Mr. Stanton. The same quality appears in his dealing with Horace Greeley and the New York Tribune, and the radical members of Congress. It finds perhaps its fullest expression in his dealing with his two great ministers who would fain have been his rivals. We stand aghast to-day at the infatuation which prompted Seward to submit his "thoughts for the President's consideration" on the 1st of April, 1861. Nothing could better illustrate the way in which the men who were close to him had as yet failed to take his measure. A violent man would have immediately dismissed the secretary. A weak man would have sought an opportunity of ridding himself of so uncomfortable a companion. Lincoln proved his greatness by the quiet and courageous policy which retained the man in his position and taught the cabinet officer his place. Not less conspicuous was the generosity which at a subsequent time,

after Chase had been obliged to retire from the cabinet because of his extraordinary want of judgment and loyalty, led Lincoln to offer him the greatest office in the gift of the President. There are few men in the history of the world who could have done so magnanimous an act as to appoint Mr. Chase to the Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Court of the United States when he was an avowed rival and a disgraced minister, and it only adds to the nobility of the deed that the appointment was an act as patriotic as generous, for there was no one better fitted to discharge the duties of that great office. This act proved Mr. Lincoln to be truly magnanimous. This noble word has not always had exactly the same significance, but it has always expressed qualities of mind and heart which our great President conspicuously possessed. Lord Bacon gave us a measure for a man when he said: "Magnanimity no doubt consisteth in contempt of peril, contempt of profit, and in meriting of the times wherein one liveth." And no man ever more perfectly filled that measure.

I shall not dwell upon that dreadful hour which brought death swift, unlooked for, to close a half finished career. God who governs the destinies of men is inscrutable in his providence. Humanly speaking Lincoln's work was but begun. He alone had the grasp to hold the problems of reconstruction in his mighty hand: he alone could hope to pass through the dark days of doubt and jealousy and pain, wisely and well. No man ever died more inopportunely. No man has been more missed out of the counsels of the nation than he. I know it has been the custom to take a different view. Some have said that he saved his fame in passing away, because he was unequal to the task before him; more appreciative critics have said that no future "could copy fair his past." To my mind he had hitherto but been fighting his way to a congenial sphere of work. For the work before him was congenial, fitted to his peculiar

powers of mind, and had his hand but been upon the helm the war echoes which long lingered in the hill country of the Carolinas, by the silent bayous of the Mississippi, and in the wild forests of Arkansas, had soon been lost in one universal jubilee. Our country is one. His fame is the possession of no state or section. To the white man of Carolina and Louisiana his labors brought a blessing quite as much as to the black man. Another generation will surely see this.

The words with which President Lincoln closed his immortal address at Gettysburg may well constitute for us a sacred trust. "We highly resolve that they shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth." This new birth of freedom included a serene trust in the good providence of God, an abiding faith in the Union as free and making free, a courageous confidence in the ability of all men without regard to race or color to profit by free institutions, and a firm purpose that the black man established in his rights to life and liberty should be guaranteed the right to the pursuit of happiness. We may well count it a specific charge to us to see that the black man, no longer slave or freedman, but free born and with free born aspirations shall share the privileges of this great people once more united in prosperity under the good providence of God. It is for us to see that his ignorance is replaced through systematic education, that his passions are subdued by moral training, that his capacities of mind and heart are called into activity by a generous sympathy, and that his manhood is challenged by a helpfulness worthy of the man who gave his life that this Union might be all free.

The way of the cross has for us no rational explanation. As Whittier says:

> The healing of his seamless robe
> Is by our beds of pain.

If we would triumph with Him, we must also suffer with Him.

The assassin dropped into the alembic the last bitter drop. The subtle alchemy of fellowship and love has made of that bitter draught the tonic of a new patriotism.

We may not be able to explain, but our poets have enabled us in some measure to understand the blow that blasted forty million hopes. No one has caught the agony too deep for tears as Whitman has. But after the bitterness of his cry it is to Isaiah that we who have entered into the fruitage of his life must turn for an interpretation.

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up,—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths — for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass—their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sin."

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